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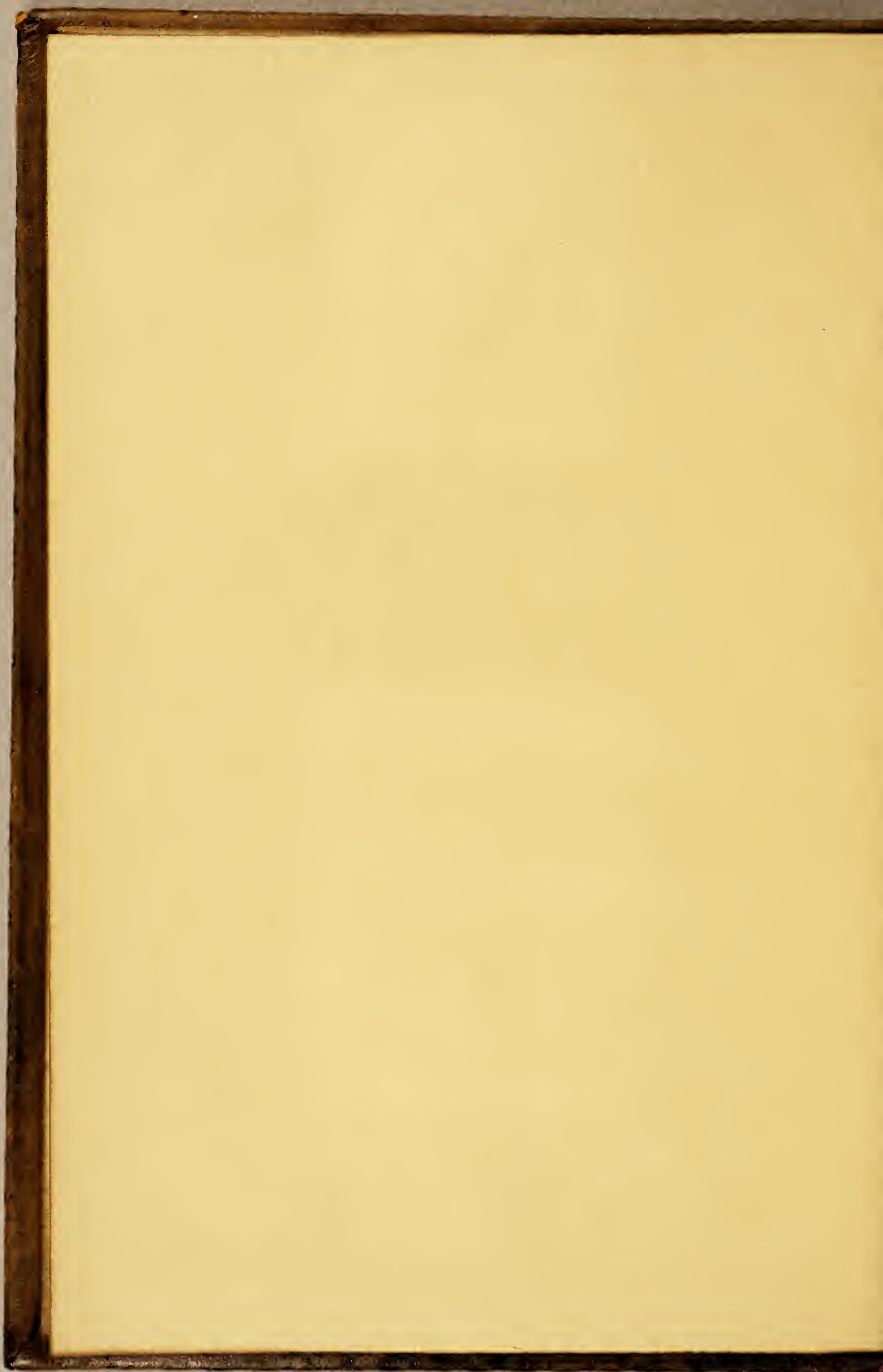


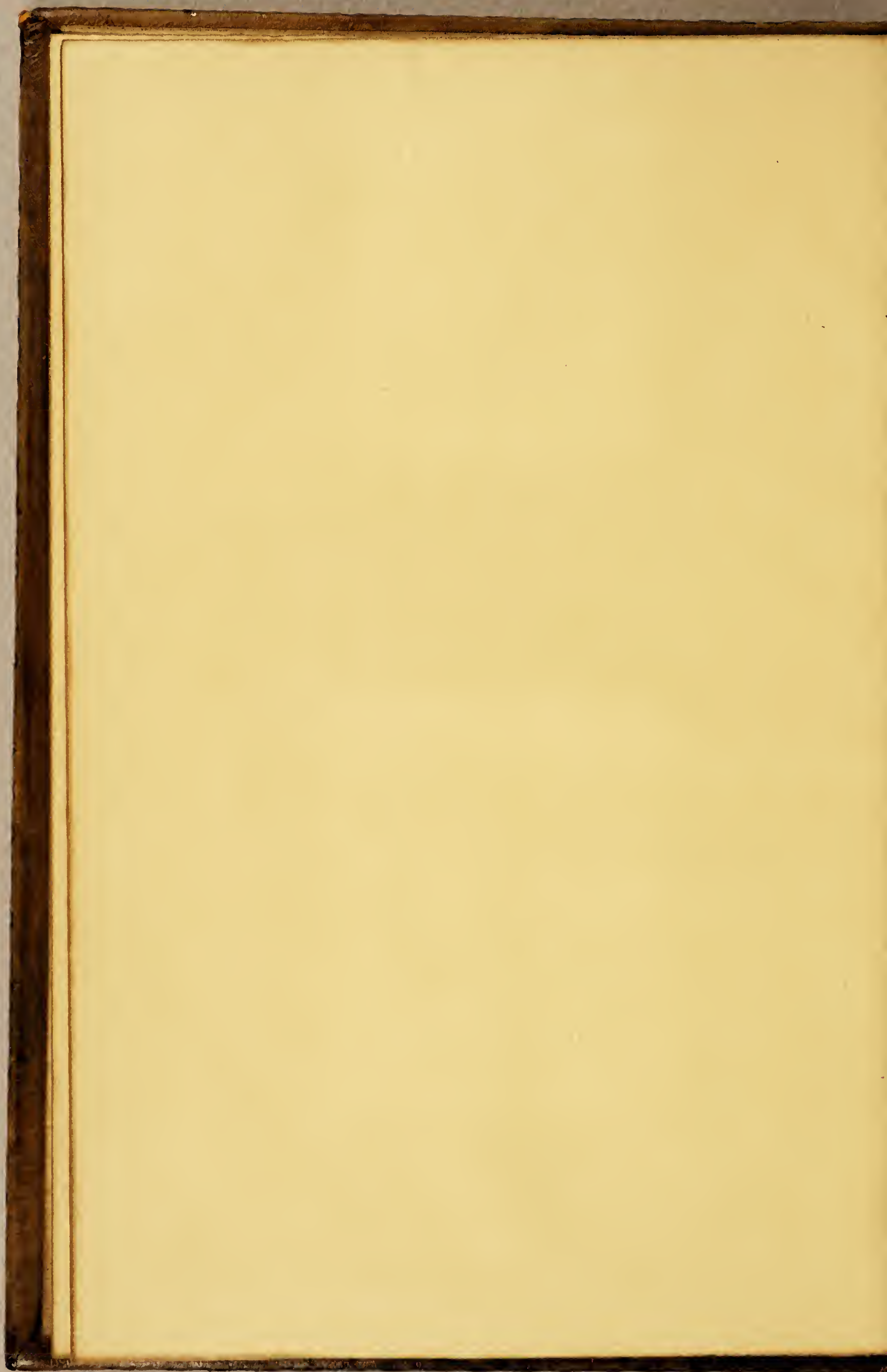
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A
LETTER
FROM
NEW JERSEY,
IN
AMERICA,
GIVING SOME
ACCOUNT and DESCRIPTION
OF THAT
PROVINCE.

By a GENTLEMAN, late of
CHRIST'S College, CAMBRIDGE.

LONDON:

Printed for M. COOPER in Pater-noster-row.

M,DCC,LVI.

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PRICE



A

LETTER

FROM

NEW JERSEY, &c.

SIR,

I MUST own I have been guilty of a great neglect, in that having been so long abroad, I have never wrote to you in all the time ; though I could assure myself from a large experience of your friendship, that it would not be unpleasing to you to hear how this country and climate have agreed with me. Therefore now that I have set pen to paper, I think I have more to do than one that has made his compliments in due time, and shall endeavour to

A 2

entertain

entertain you with some account of this place and of the people, yet not intending an history, tho' I shall exceed the length of an epistle.

It was on the 29th day of August, 1745, when I arrived at New York, after a passage of seven weeks from England, having, through Divine Providence, happily escaped the perils of the seas, and the danger from privateers; and being snatched away from that scene of confusion happening by the rebellion, which broke out soon after I left England; so that I had not the discomfort of seeing my country in any part of that miserable broil.

We were chased two days by a large ship near the Azores: we took it to be an Algerine; and had he come up to us, we must have struck to him, not having the

the pass requisite to save us that compliment ; and being chased very close, we had a dreary view of Barbary in imagination.

We passed the French fleet coming from Martinico, with a convoy of three men of war, and were very near them, but yet safe enough, having the wind-side of them, and a fresh gale.

I was very much pleased with the city of New York, as well as much obliged by the courtesy and hospitality, which the gentlemen and citizens of that place are deservedly applauded for, by all strangers. The city itself is not large, but populous, and is accounted the richest in all the British colonies.

I did not expect that this remote part of his majesty's dominions could shew so much elegance and politeness as is to be seen here.

Mr.

Mr. Cowley in the preface to his poems mentions, that he had indulged the thoughts of going to America, to be there out of the world : and doubtless he would then have found, that he had made an exchange very perfect to his mind. But if any one should now propose to himself the same thing, he would make this discovery by going over, that the ocean only divides one country from another, and that there is the world also beyond seas.

The adjacent province of New Jersey, which I come now to give you some description of, has been settled a little above an hundred years. It is as well cultivated as any of the colonies, yet is much in dishabille, or at least seems so, to one that has not seen late settled places. I have imagined it like a world half emerged out of Chaos,
and

and the farms which lye interspersed in the bosom of thick woods, resemble the face of the sky after a tempest, when the clouds are breaking away and dispersing.

The pleasantest spots that you see here, are but homely beauties ; and one finds none of those landscapes which our island of Great Britain affords. Almost wherever you pass upon the roads, you are either in woods, or have woods on one side of you ; and the view which is on the open side, is terminated within so near bounds as the breadth of a field or two, so that the horizon is hardly any where clear, and to view the country from an eminence, it seems to be almost all woods.

The roads in most places are very good, but then you travel in a maze, having neither mile-stone,
nor

nor Mercury for your direction ; only here and there is a tree marked with the initial letter of the name of the next town, but so ill cut, that one can hardly know it to be an alphabetical character.

A few scattered houses make here a village ; and in those towns where the buildings stand in line, they are not contiguous.

The capital town of this province is Perth Amboy. Its situation is very delightful. It has a fine harbour, but is a place of no trade, and very little of any business is done in it. Most of the houses in this country are wooden structures, compiled of pine boards, or cedar shingles. The houses of our gentry have a large thorow entry, with folding doors for coolness in the summer time, and here sit the wives and daughters at their work, like Minerva and her nymphs,

nymphs, without head-dress, gown, shoes, or stockings.

The people are naturally brisk, and of a lively temper. They stand much upon a footing of equality among each other †, and those of the common sort, by conversing freely with persons in office and commission, acquire a knowledge of things and business, and receive a brightening, by which they are far superior to our countrymen of the same rank.

Religion is here divided into many sects and parties; and the men, who are extreme kind husbands, go commonly the way that the wife is of.

The justices of the peace are the great marriage-mongers in this country, and the expert ones tie the sacred knot with as little ceremony, and as quick dispatch, as

B

Alexander

* Nemo magnopere eminet in novo populo.

LIVY.

Alexander cut the famous knot at Gordium; so that sometimes the parties are dismissed with the solemn pronunciation, when they are scarce fairly joined together.

The poor Indians, who not much above an hundred years since were the people of the country, are now reduced to about that number of persons. They have a little town of their own, and some land at a place called Cranbury, and have lately been brought to confess christianity.

In the year 1727, their king Tantámi was executed by the English law, for a murder. The general character of the Indians has been, that they were lovers of honesty, but cruel in their anger: and it has been said of them, as Mela says of the *Axiacæ**, *Furari quid sit ignorant, ideóque nec sua cus-*

* Lib. ii. cap. 8.

todiunt,

todiunt, nec aliena contingunt. But then they have been formerly such hunters for revenge, that when a quarrel was begun in blood, they pursued it with seeking life for life, and it was never ended, till the two families had extinguished one another.

The Indians were skilled in vegetable physick, but their leaping out of a hot house immediately into a pond, one would think too bold a plunge for the recovery of health.

In tilling the ground the heads of the arrows are often found, which the Indians shot with, before they had guns. These are flints chipped into form, and are very finished pieces; extremely well pointed, and having a little stem, by which they were fastened into the shaft. Dr. Plot mentions that the likesort

of piles have been frequently found in Scotland, and some in England.

Though the country is pregnant of iron, the Indians knowing no better, were fain to make stone serve the use of it, for the few instruments and utensils which their necessities called for; and these seem to be all the sorts they had, besides the arrows used by them in their hunting expeditions, viz. a pestle to beat out and pound their corn with, an ax, and a tobacco pipe.

The poor people in general live better here than, I believe, most where, by the favour of the plenty and cheapness of provisions; besides, getting their children into good families by the time they are six or seven years of age, they have little experience of the charge of them, so that very few turn beggars, or go to seek their bread from home,

home, but with their working tools upon their backs.

You must certainly think, that thefts and robberies cannot but be very rife among us, as these colonies are obliged to take all the rogues and villains that are yearly transported from the several jails in England. But I can assure you, it is much otherwise; and people think so little of the danger of these things, that many families never fasten their doors when they go to bed; and the good housewives, that have cloth in bleaching, never take it in at nights. As to picking of pockets, the practice is utterly unknown, and the roads are perfectly uninfested and secure.

But the wonder of this will evaporate, when I tell you, that none of the Newgate gentry are landed here, but always either in Virginia,
or

or some of the southern colonies, where however they are no calamity: for the masters of the transports make them all bind themselves by indenture to him for four years, and then sell them for that term, to any that will buy them: which however it proves, that these captains and their passengers are all of a stamp alike, yet is of this good, that it prevents them from being nuisances, and pests; and they are obliged to honest labour; whereas if they were set ashore, and might strolle where they please, they would soon fall to their old trades again.

The spring is here commonly late, but when the year does begin to dress, the ornaments of nature are out all at once. In a few days the scene is quite changed. The vast orchards are clad in a
thick

thick bloom, which makes the country look, and smell like a paradise.

The planters come slowly into the way of hedging. I have seen very little hawthorn planted here. Yet the climate and soil are kindly to it, and this useful shrub may be cultivated to good effect, when the people can persuade themselves that they have need of it.

The country is well watered with fine streams and rivers, and every house has a draw-well.

The woods, although abounding with very beautiful birds, are the dullest of all sylvan scenes. The mocking bird is the mimick of them all, and a complete droll in his way. But nothing is so beautiful and diminutive, as that little feathered spark; the hummingbird, who with the most gallant address courts the daughters of the garden,
in

in a coat of plumage, composed of the finest feathers.

A certain tree called sumach grows frequent here in swampy grounds, which is of so poisonous a quality, that the very air which blows from it is infectious, and will cause inflammations and swellings in the face, so that people are sometimes laid up for it, and cannot stir about their business for several days. The mention of this puts me in mind to speak of the barberry tree, which the planters reckon very pernicious to grain, especially, I think, wheat, and tell you that an whole field will be blighted where any of this shrub grows.

I have never heard of an earthquake being felt in these parts, but only one, which was in the year 1736. The effects of lightening are frequent to be seen in riding thro' the

the country, by many stately trees blasted and killed with it ; and the stress of it often falls to more considerable damage.

In summer time, for about two months, the air is bespangled every night with a kind of flies, which they call fire-flies. They are very much in swamps and woods of a wet soil, and in those gloomy places make an extraordinary appearance. Their light is not steady, but reciprocates ; and in the silent night, hovering about in their bright form, they almost give the mind an impression of beings haunting there, of some higher note and consideration than an insect.

Dr. Plot mentions in his natural history of Staffordshire, that there have been of these flies seen in England about the year 1678, but first noted to be in England by Mr. Ray.

C

The

The old country people that have removed to these parts, are observed to be longer lived than those who are born here, few of whom live to any great age. I conceive the reason of this to be, that the natives are extremely subject to the tooth-ach, and lose their teeth early ; for these are the guarantees of health, and when they begin to drop, one may then date it the fall of the leaf.

The plantations or farms that have been from the first settling of the country, retain the burying grounds still sacred to that use. And where estates are passed away, that privilege is reserved to the family to which they had belonged. The observing a farmer at his plough, near the inclosed spot where his fathers sleep in the dust, may give rise to various thoughts of a serious kind ; but some will think no more
of

of it, only that here is so much ground lying in mortmain, as might produce every time a full bushel of grain. It is mentioned by Cicero in his 2d book, De Legibus, of that famous republican Plato, that he did not allow any tillable land to be applied to funeral uses; but held that such ground only is proper to receive the remains of the dead which can be spared without detriment to the surviving. Land that can yield, and like a mother, dispense fruit, let no one, says he, infringe upon, neither living, nor deceased.

This country's provisions are not of the best, but such as will relish very well with those that are not of too nice a palate. The people live chiefly upon salt meat and roots, of the same as grow in England, besides pompions and squashes, of which they eat plentifully

fully with their victuals. But their most reigning dish is maize, ground, and boiled into a diet they call suppaun. With this the board is crowned three times a day. The young men grow strong by it, and the young women fair, and every age of life rejoices in it, as an wholesome and kindly food.

The beer that is made here is not pleasant to an English taste, nor is much drank but among the Dutch, who are the brewers of it. They so infatuate their barley in the drying, that what is drawn from it is the very oil of smoke. The common liquor is cyder, which at different times of the year is as fluent as water, and as scarce as wine.

The people are not nice in cultivating good fruit, only apples and peaches, which latter grow all upon standard trees, in great plenty, and come to great perfection.

fection. The pears are trash, except their scarcity makes them any thing. The same are the plumbs. There is no want of cherries, but of good ones.

It is very remarkable that dogs never are known here to go mad, notwithstanding the summers are so very hot; and yet in Pennsylvania, which is a neighbouring province, it is very common. This being so, I am induced to think, that madness is originally and naturally incidental only to hounds, because there they keep such, and there are none in this province.

The pleasant weather of the autumn commonly lasts till the end of October, but sometimes as late as Christmas. Then the winter takes possession, and puts on the tyrant's face the first day.

A good farm raises and manufactures all it's provisions, viz.
bread,

bread, flesh, drink, cloaths, firing, candles, soap, tobacco, and has all it's work done by it's own slaves.

Some of the negroes have among them a strange art of poisoning, though not common in the instances of it, but very mysterious, and much like what is related of the Italian pharmacy. It is mentioned by Aulus Gellius, † that something of this was known of old by the Carthaginians, who indeed were masters in every kind of villainy.

The woods and swamps breed several kinds of wild beasts, as wolves, panthers, bears, racoons, but these are so rare, that people passing through these places, are in little danger or fear of them.

The clearing woodland for tillage is a much less work than cutting down every tree. The em-

† Noctes Atticæ, lib. 6. cap. 4.

peror Severus in clearing the lands in Britain, lost 50000 of his men; but the American planters spare their men, and only kill the trees. They cut up the brush, and saplings, and leave the timber trees, having girt, that is, cut them round their bole, to fall of themselves as they decay, and then immediately go to ploughing and sowing among them.

I think I can aver it, of the people of this province, that they are generally well affected to the British constitution, as they are very happy under the influences of the present reign, which indulges them in all the advantages and privileges, all the ease and freedom, that any people can enjoy.

I will conclude this epistle with an account of that infamous reptile, the rattle snake, which is the most dangerous reckoned of any
poisonous

poisonous creature known in this part of the world.

The rattle snake hardly ever measures out six feet in length. He has a gorgeous skin or coat, that may vie with any rich brocade. His summer's haunt is in meadows and swampy grounds among long grass, *Coluber mala gramina pastus*. During the winter season he harbours in the ground, or in the sides of hills where there are craggy stones. They are said to lye up a number of them together. Their age may be known by the number of rings upon their tail. But it is certainly a mistake, that the rings grow single, one every year. By this account, some that I have seen must have been eight or ten years old. But having had the curiosity to take in pieces one of these rattles, I found the parts which must be of one year's growth,
to

to consist of two rings and a small tip. The next year there grows such another part under the first, which thrusts it off from the flesh, and it remains like a cap upon it, that protuberance which is next the tip holding it on. In like manner the succeeding growths are produced. This curious member nature has designed for giving persons warning, when they happen unwarily to approach near the snake. A man has just time to recollect himself, and stop his pace, before he comes in immediate danger to be bit by it, which will be within the distance of the snake's length. For if he lay at his full stretch before, as soon as any one comes near him, he draws himself in, and is wound up in a close coil, with his tail pointed upward, and his head laid back; and he gives his rattle such a brisk agita-

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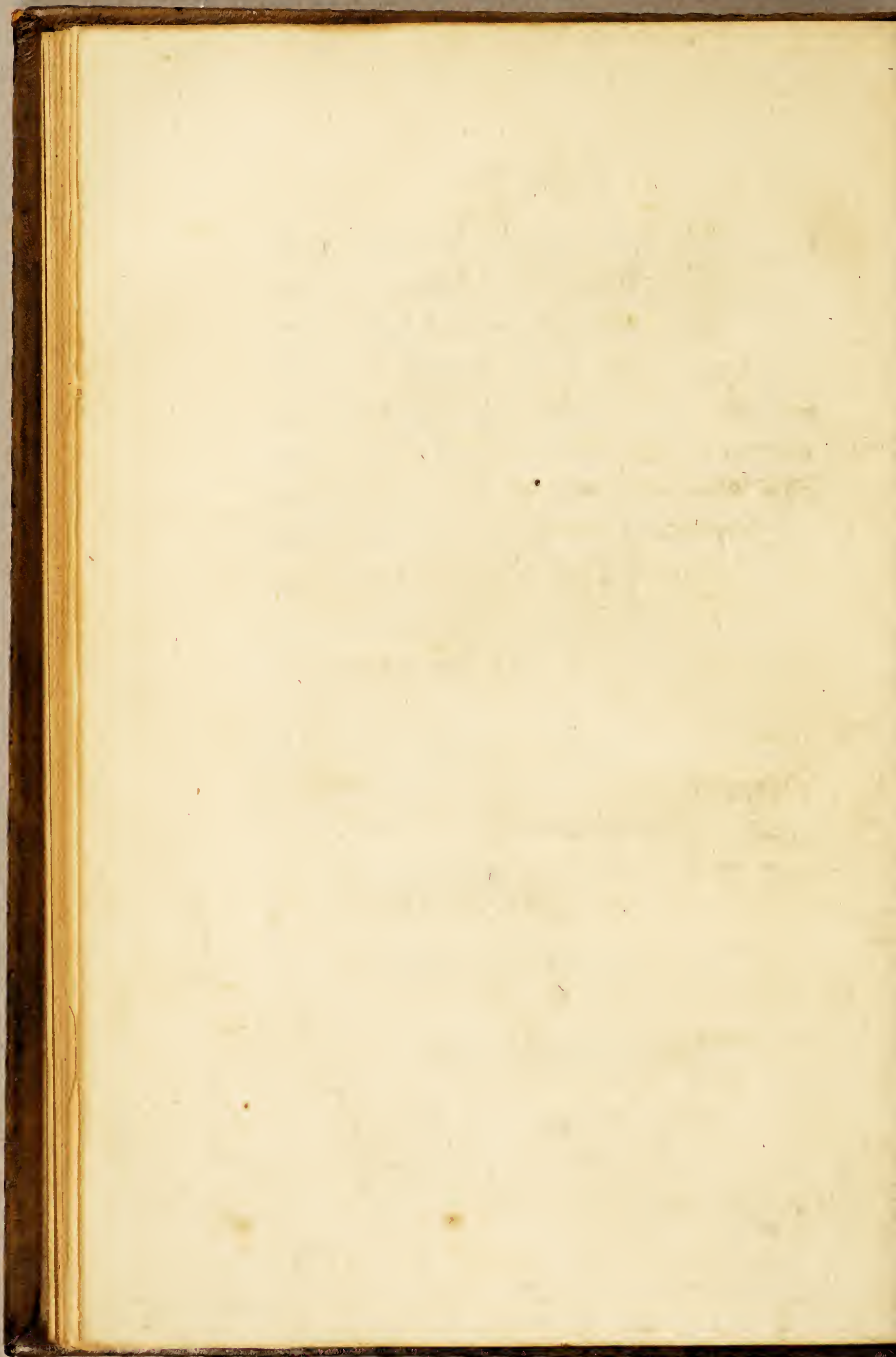
tion, that it sounds like the tremulous motion of a musical chord: and then if the person does not stop, or divert his course, he instantly flings out upon him. The teeth of this animal are curved, exquisitely fine and sharp, two on each side the gum, and are shut up like a cat's claw, till when he goes to bite. Sometimes the mowers happen to straddle over them and receive no hurt; but they always give the signal, when they are prepared for mischief.

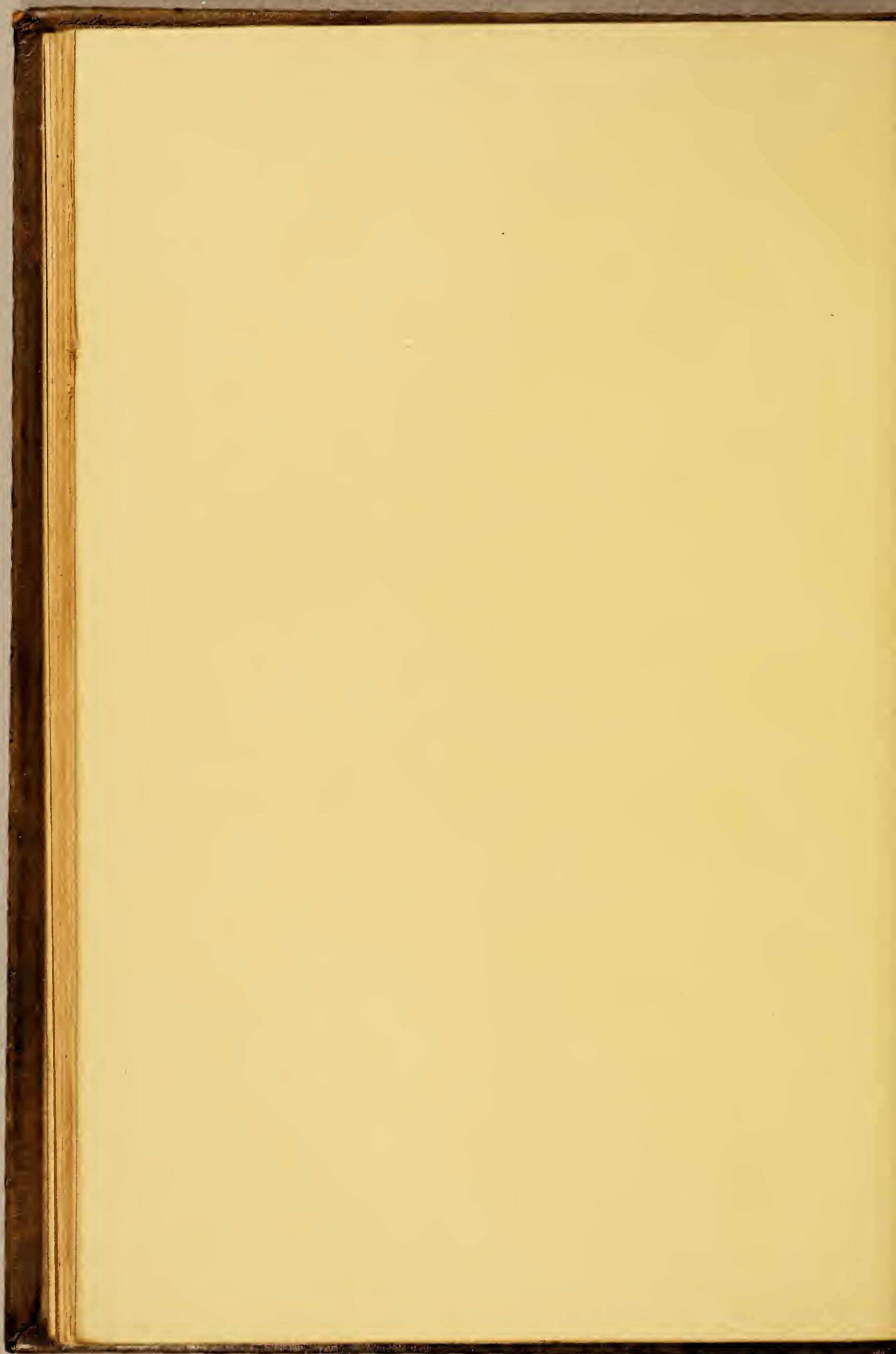
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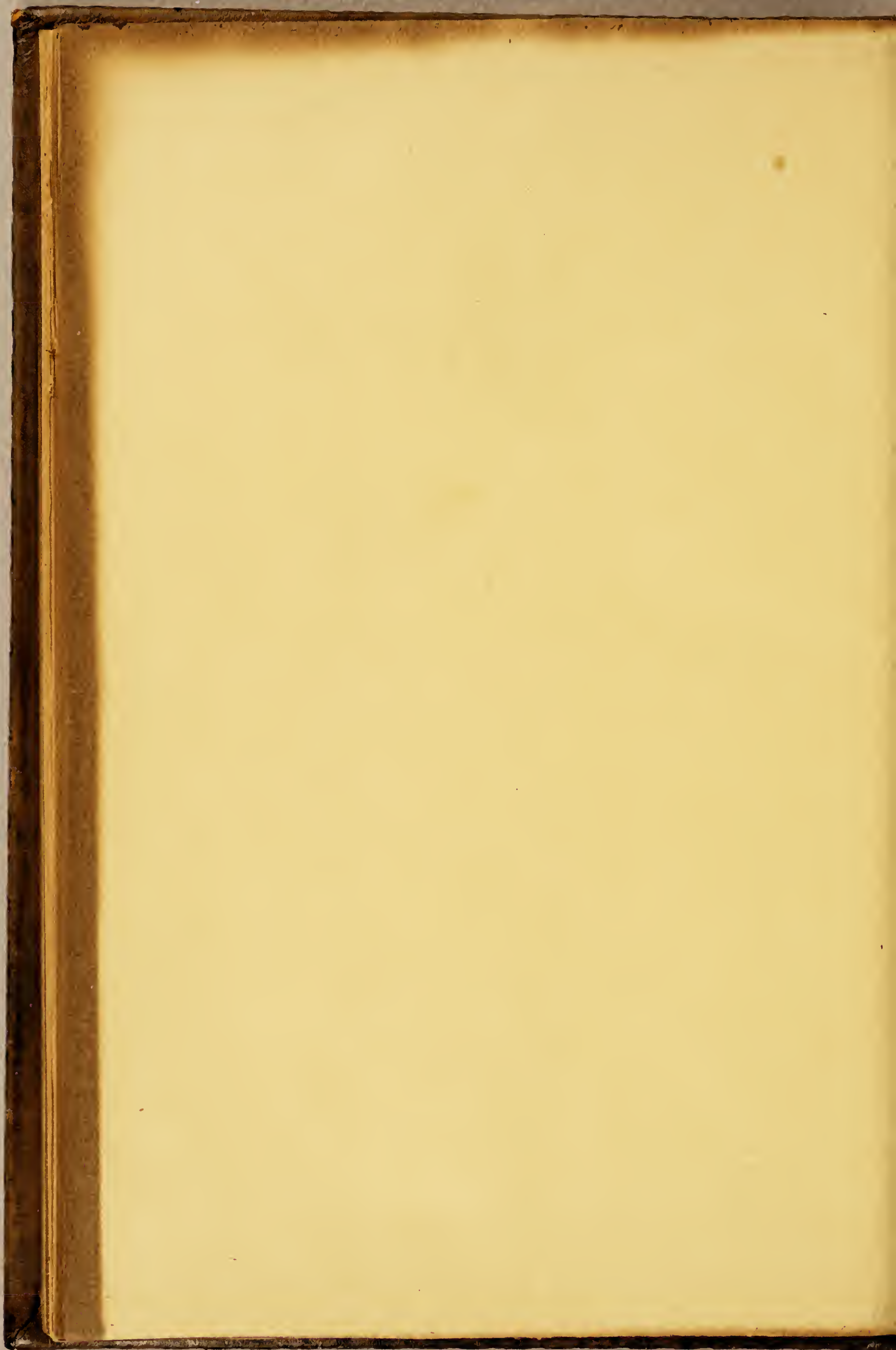
Your most obedient and

most humble servant,

T. T.







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